

THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

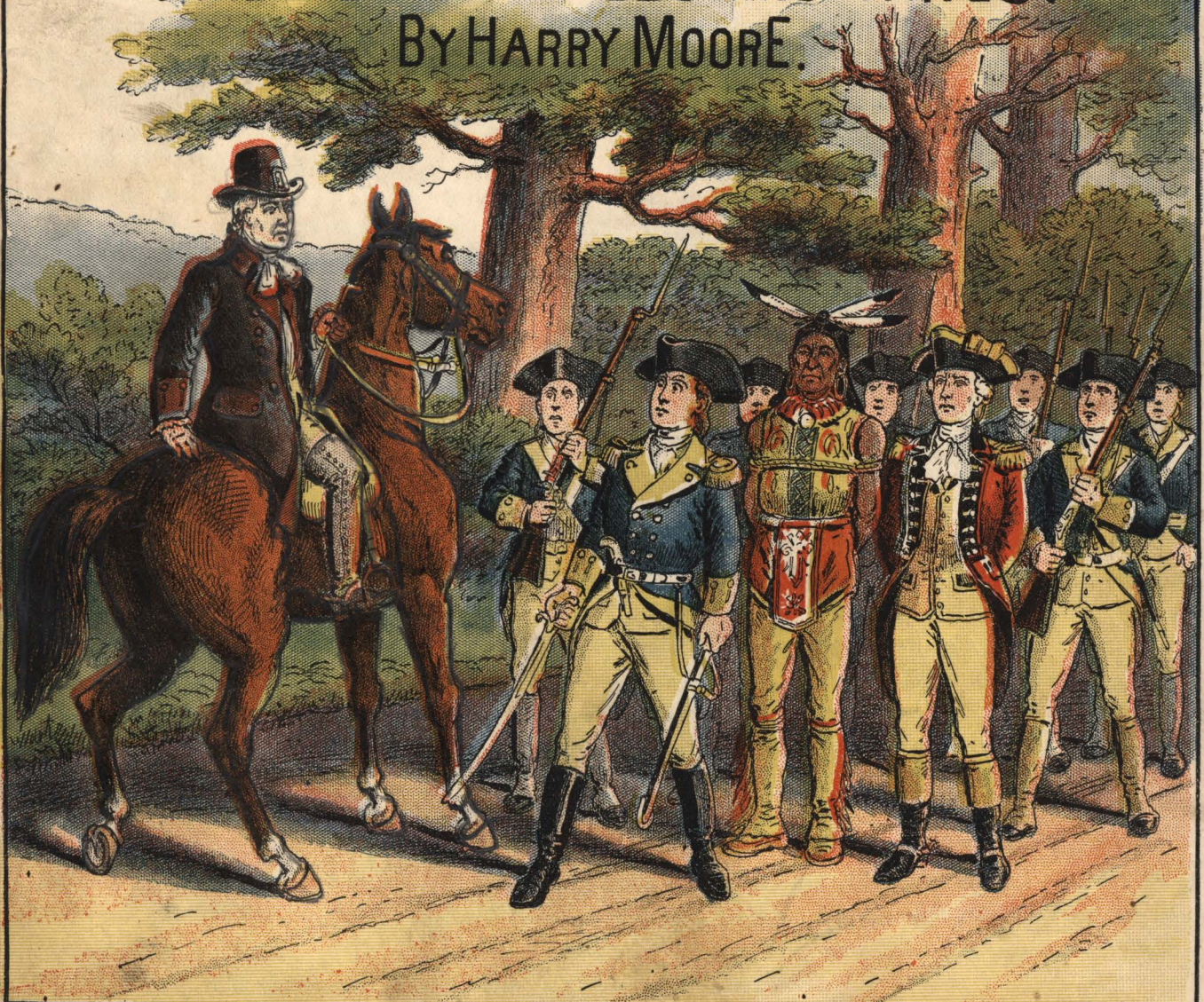
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No. 30.

NEW YORK, JULY 26, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS IN A FIX; OR THREATENED BY REDS AND WHITES. BY HARRY MOORE.



"The Indians and redcoats are all around us; we are in a bad fix!" the scout said. "We have a chief and one of the British officers prisoners," said Dick, "and we may be able to make terms with our enemies."

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CHAPTER I.

THE MESSENGERS.

"Say, Dick, it will seem nice to get home and see the folks again."

"You are right, Bob."

"Let's see, how long since we saw them, old man?"

"Nearly eight months, Bob."

"That's a long time, eh?"

"Yes; at least it has seemed a long time to me."

"And to me. Say, the folks will be about as tickled as we will be, Dick."

"I judge so."

"I know a couple of girls who will be pleased, eh, old man?"

This was said with a chuckle.

"I hope so, Bob."

"You 'hope so!' You know so, you rascal! Edith and Alice will be the happiest girls in all New York State when we ride up."

"I guess you are right, Bob."

Two youths were riding along a road leading northward toward Tarrytown, N. Y.

They were handsome young fellows.

They were bronzed and healthy looking as well.

They wore citizen's clothing, but there was an air about them that betokened military training.

These two youths were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, two of the most famous young fellows in the patriot army.

Dick was the captain of a band of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

He and Bob had gotten up the company from among the neighbors' boys, at the beginning of the war of the Revolution, and Dick had been made captain.

Bob was his right-hand man, and they were almost inseparable.

The youths had made themselves famous in other ways.

They had each done wonderful and valuable work as scouts and spies.

They were the most trusted scouts and spies in the

patriot army, as well as the most famous and successful ones.

Such splendid work had they done that they had brought themselves to the notice of the British commander-in-chief, General Howe.

He had offered a standing reward of five hundred pounds for the capture of either of the youths.

They had done more to cause the British plans to miscarry than anything else that could be thought of.

They had managed, again and again, to enter the lines of the British and discover the plans which were being made, or had been made.

General Howe would have considered the youths cheap at five hundred pounds apiece.

But he had so far been unable to catch and hold them.

Dick had been captured once or twice, but had escaped almost immediately.

So much for the past.

Now for the present:

Dick and Bob were bound for Albany.

They were the bearers of a message from General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the patriot army, to General Schuyler.

In going from General Washington's headquarters down in New Jersey, up to Albany, the youths could pass their own homes without going much out of their way.

Their homes were only a short distance north from Tarrytown.

Their parents had lived on adjoining farms ever since the youths could remember.

So Dick and Bob had grown up together.

Another thing: Each of the youths had a sister.

Edith Slater and Alice Estabrook were about seventeen years of age, and were two as sweet, pretty and lovable girls as could have been found in a year's search.

Dick and Bob had fallen in love with each other's sister. In this they evinced most commendable taste.

The girls returned the youths' love.

And in so doing they also evinced good taste, for there were few brighter, more handsome, more manly, youths than Dick and Bob.

By riding hard the youths had gained several hours' time, and they intended to spend the time with their loved ones.

They were now within a mile of Tarrytown, and as they came to a comparatively smooth stretch of road they urged their horses to a swifter pace.

They were soon at the outskirts of Tarrytown.

They rode into the village, and right on through.

They had to slow up while riding up the steep hill, but were soon riding at good speed again.

They rode rapidly the rest of the way, and twenty minutes later they came to a stop in front of a neat farmhouse, standing back perhaps fifty yards from the road.

This was the home of Bob.

Less than a quarter of a mile farther on, on the same side of the road, was another house, very much like this one in size and general appearance.

This was the home of Dick.

As the two horsemen reined up in front of Bob's home, the front door of the house opened and a couple of girls of perhaps seventeen years of age emerged.

They were talking and laughing, and had their attention turned to some flowers growing beside the house.

They did not glance out toward the road at all.

They turned toward the flowers and stooped over to look at them and smell the sweet perfume.

Their backs were thus toward the road.

The youths had been on the point of calling out to the girls as they emerged from the house, but Bob made a gesture to Dick not to do so.

"Wait," he said, in a low tone, "let's give them a surprise. They haven't seen us."

"All right," agreed Dick, eager for it himself.

For the girls were Edith and Alice, the youths' sweethearts.

The youths leaped quickly and silently to the ground. Their well-trained animals would stand wherever left, so the youths did not have to tie them.

They walked quickly to the gate and opened it.

They passed through, and then made their way up the graveled path.

They had to tread carefully, to keep the loose stones and gravel from rattling and betraying their approach.

The girls were so engrossed with the flowers and with their conversation, however, that they were not likely to hear the youths unless they made considerable noise.

This they did not intend to do.

They stole softly forward.

When they were within ten feet of the maidens the youths paused, Dick having made a gesture to Bob to do so.

The youths stood and listened to the chatter of the two innocent and unsuspecting girls.

It is an old saying that eavesdroppers never hear any good of themselves.

This may be true, as a general rule.

There are exceptions to all rules, however.

And this was one of the times when it was an exception.

The youths were the subject of the girls' remarks.

"Goodness! Edith, how long has it been since we heard from Dick and Bob?" she was remarking at that very instant.

"It has been four months, Alice."

"Four months! It seems more like a year to me."

"It has seemed like a long time sure. But it seems longer since the last time we saw them, Alice."

"True. Oh, how I wish we might see them now!"

"What would you do?"

Bob blurted this out in his usual impulsive manner.

A scream went up from the two girls in unison.

They had supposed themselves to be alone.

They had no idea that any one was in hearing distance of them.

They straightened up as they uttered the cries, and whirled around to see who had spoken.

The instant they saw Dick and Bob they gave utterance to a single word—each of them, but the word was not the same.

Edith exclaimed: "Bob!"

Alice exclaimed: "Dick!"

The youths gave the girls no time to say more.

They leaped forward and seized the maidens in their arms.

They held the girls tightly, and almost smothered them with kisses.

But the girls did not try to get free.

They did not seem to object to this kind of treatment.

Indeed, if the truth must be told, they seemed to rather like it.

They threw their arms around the youths' necks and returned the kisses, with interest.

But this could not last forever, and presently the youths released the girls, who hastened to ask questions.

Where had the youths come from?

Where were they going?

Had they come home on a visit?

How long would they stay?

Had they been wounded?

These and a score more of questions were hurled at the youths.

They did their best to answer, but it was more than they

could accomplish to answer all, so they answered such as they could.

While they were talking the door opened and a woman stepped out of doors.

"How are you, mother, dear?" cried Bob, and he leaped forward and gave his mother a hug and a kiss.

"Oh, Bob! Is it indeed you?" his mother cried. Then she burst into tears.

"Yes, it is I, mother; and here's Dick. But what are you crying about?"

"Because I am so happy to see you boys back home again, alive and well, Bob," was the gentle, earnest reply; "they are tears of happiness."

Then Mrs. Estabrook greeted Dick, warmly.

She knew that Dick and Alice loved each other, and she was glad to see Dick because she knew how happy it made her daughter to see him. Then, too, she liked Dick very much, indeed. She had known him all his life, and knew he was a splendid young fellow, worthy of the love of any girl.

Mrs. Estabrook had not much more than gotten through greeting Dick when Mr. Estabrook came around the corner of the house.

He paused and stared at the little group in amazement.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "Can it be possible that it is Bob and Dick? Why, you young rascals, where did you come from, anyway?"

"From down in Jersey, father," replied Bob. "How are you?"

"We are, and have all the time been well, my boy. How have you two been getting along?"

"Finely, father. Don't we look it?"

The man nodded.

"I must admit that you look healthy, Bob."

"We are healthy, too, father!" declared Bob. "You just wait till you see us at the supper-table and then you'll say so."

It was now about four o'clock, and it was the youths' intentions to remain with their folks till nightfall, taking supper at home and then ride onward on their way.

"How long are you going to stay with us?" asked Mrs. Estabrook.

This was one of the questions the girls had asked at the very first, but the youths had not answered it.

Now, however, Dick said, quietly:

"We can stay only a few hours, Mrs. Estabrook; we will take supper at our homes, and then as soon as nightfall comes we will have to be off."

"What! Not going to stay longer than that?"

A cry of disappointment went up from the two girls.

"Oh, you mustn't go so soon!"

They uttered the cry simultaneously.

"We must do that very thing," said Dick. "We are on our way to Albany, with a message from the commander-in-chief to General Schuyler, and we have gained about three hours by hard riding, and we can stay here that long without feeling as if we are stealing time."

"Oh, so you are messengers, are you?" remarked Mr. Estabrook.

"Yes," replied Dick; "and we promised to deliver the message by a certain date."

"I understand. Well, we are very glad to have you with us even for a few hours, though, of course, we should be glad to have you for days instead of hours."

None of the members of the party had noticed it, but when the youths had stated that they were messengers, and were enroute for Albany with a message for General Schuyler, a man's face was stuck around the corner of the house and eager eyes were upon them, while every word was listened to with avidity.

CHAPTER II.

HOME AGAIN.

The others all echoed the words of Mr. Estabrook.

The youths knew the folks were speaking the truth.

They were well aware of the fact that it would have given the folks great pleasure if they could have stayed weeks instead of only hours.

Suddenly Dick looked around.

"I must hasten on over home and see mother," he exclaimed.

Then, without waiting for more words, he set out on the run.

He cut across the orchard, leaped the division fence and ran to the house where he lived all his life, until he left there to go into the patriot army.

He paused at the door, which was open.

He glanced through the doorway.

His mother was seated in a low rocking-chair, gently rocking and sewing.

Instinctively, seemingly, she realized that some one was at the doorway.

She looked up.

As she saw and recognized Dick, a cry of joy escaped her.

"Dick, my son!"

"Mother!"

Dick bounded through the doorway as his mother rose to her feet.

The next instant Dick held his mother in his arms and was hugging and kissing her.

If ever there was a happy woman it was Mrs. Slater.

She held Dick off at arm's length and gazed into his face.

"I am so, so happy, Dick!" she murmured. "I am so glad to see you again, alive and well."

"And I'm glad to see you, mother."

And, indeed, he was, for Dick was one of those right-minded sort of youths who love their parents.

Unfortunately, Dick had no father to greet him.

Mr. Slater had been killed soon after the beginning of the war.

He was a strong patriot, and was, moreover, a fearless one. He had always stated his views plainly, fearlessly and unreservedly.

The result was that he had been murdered—shot down in front of his own door by a band of Tory neighbors, who had been angered by Mr. Slater's plain statements.

Dick had been a witness of the shooting of his father, and had rushed into the house, seized a rifle, and, then rushing out, he had shot and mortally wounded the man who had shot his father. Then Dick had clubbed the rifle and had attacked the Tories, and so fiercely that they fled.

Dick thought of all this now, and it was the one sad-denying thought.

He would not make his mother feel bad by saying anything, however.

He knew it was better that she should not think of her murdered husband too often or too much.

So Dick made the most of the pleasure of being with his mother again.

While they were talking, and just after Mrs. Slater had asked Dick how long he would be at home, and after he had told her he and Bob must go on, soon after supper, Edith came running in and told them that Mr. and Mrs. Estabrook wished that they should all come over and take supper there.

It was decided to accept the invitation, and, in order that all might visit together and hear what was said, it was decided to go over there and spend the rest of the afternoon.

The three walked over to Mr. Estabrook's, and were greeted joyously.

It was indeed a pleasant gathering.

There was some rapid talking, and the youths answered questions as best they could.

After an hour, Dick and Alice, and Bob and Edith left

the house and walked to the edge of the timber, which came up to within a short distance of the house.

They sat down underneath the trees, the two couples choosing trees some distance apart, and the hour that they spent there was an hour of exquisite pleasure for the four.

At last, when it neared supper-time, they rose from the benches, with smothered sighs, and made their way slowly back to the house.

Mrs. Slater was helping Mrs. Estabrook get supper.

And such a supper as it promised to be!

Every delicacy that the house afforded was brought out and placed on the table.

There were preserves of various kinds, canned fruits and vegetables of all kinds, ham, eggs and splendid white bread. There was so much that it would be impossible to enumerate everything; suffice it to say that when all sat down to the supper-table, they sat down to a meal fit for any one, and a meal such as the youths had not seen in many a long month.

Dick and Bob enjoyed that meal as they had not enjoyed one since they had left their homes to go into the army.

And their folks enjoyed watching the youths eat.

It was the greatest pleasure to them.

It took a long time to get through with the supper.

There was much talking indulged in, and this, of course, made it slow work.

But they were through at last, and Dick and Bob looked over the array of good things still on the table, and shook their heads and sighed.

"It's too much for us, Dick," said Bob, in mock seriousness; "I thought when we sat down here that there wouldn't be enough, but I give up. I've had all I want, and there is still enough for a dozen hungry people."

"You are right, Bob," laughed Dick; "we can't eat it all."

"I wish I could eat enough to last me a week," grinned Bob. "Say, Dick, it'll be a long time before we get another chance to eat such a meal as this."

"I judge you are right, Bob," smiled Dick. "This certainly beats army fare."

"Beats army fare! Well, I should say it does! Goodness! turnips and water, girls!—that's army fare. Just think of it. How would you like to be soldiers and eat army fare?"

"I don't think I should like it," smiled Edith.

"Nor I," from Alice.

At last all rose from the table.

It was evident that all did so reluctantly.

The reason was obvious.

The youths had stated, when they first came, that they could stay till after supper and would then have to ride up; and all felt that getting up from the supper-table would be the signal for the youths to make the move toward getting ready to start.

The youths were in no hurry, however.

They hated to start as badly as the rest hated to have them start.

They remained half an hour longer, after they had finished eating, and talked.

Then they rose and said they would have to be going.

"Don't go yet!" pleaded Edith.

"No, you don't have to hurry!" from Alice.

"You mustn't try to persuade the boys to stay longer than they think they ought to, girls," said Mr. Estabrook; "they are on an important mission, you know."

"It's important that they should not leave here in such short time, papa," smiled Alice.

The time had come, however, and the youths met the issue bravely.

Their army experience had taught them this.

They left the house, and, accompanied by Mr. Estabrook, went to the stable and got their horses.

They brought the horses around in front of the house, and then called to the folks to come out and bid them good-by.

Mrs. Estabrook, Mrs. Slater, Alice and Edith came out, now.

It was rather hard to have to take leave of their loved ones, but the youths did so.

They kissed their mothers, their sisters and their sweethearts, and then shook hands with Mr. Estabrook.

Then they mounted their horses and rode away.

It was just coming on dark.

It was not yet so dark but what it was possible to see some little distance, and the youths turned in their saddles when they were a couple of hundred yards down the road and waved their hands to their loved ones.

Then they urged their horses forward at a gallop.

"Well, we've had a nice time, Dick," said Bob, with a sigh.

"Yes, Bob. We have had a very nice time, indeed. I only wish we might have been enabled to stay two or three days."

"So do I, old man. Say, the girls were glad to see us, weren't they?"

"They certainly seemed to be, Bob."

"Certainly seemed to be!"

Bob's tone was scornful to a degree.

Dick laughed.

He understood his companion, thoroughly.

"Edith seemed glad to see you, I will admit," Dick remarked.

"And how about Alice being glad to see you? I wouldn't say anything if I were you, old man!"

"Oh, I guess she was, Bob! Indeed, I know she was."

"Now you are telling the truth, and nothing but the truth, Dick."

The youths rode onward at a gallop.

Their horses were now comparatively fresh.

Then, too, the youths were familiar with the road.

They had traveled it before.

They had gone perhaps two miles when just as they reached the top of a hill Dick gave utterance to an exclamation.

"What is it, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I thought I saw some horsemen over on top of yonder hill, Bob."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Let's stop and take a look."

The youths reined up their horses.

They peered across the hollow, and kept their eyes fixed on the top of the hill.

They did not see anything, however, and presently Dick said:

"Perhaps my eyes deceived me, after all."

They looked for a few moments longer.

"If it was anybody, who could it be, do you think, Dick?" asked Bob.

"That would be hard to say, Bob."

"Do you think there are any redcoats around here?"

"I don't know. That is a question which I cannot answer."

"Well, whoever they were, if they should try to tackle us we could hold our own, I reckon."

"I suppose so, Bob—provided there were not too many of them."

"We'll risk there being too many. There would have to be a lot of them."

"We'll ride on, Bob," said Dick. "I think we had better keep a sharp lookout, though, when we get to the top of that hill."

"All right; we'll keep a sharp lookout, Dick, and if I get my eyes on any one who looks like a redcoat, I shall pink him with a bullet!"

The youths rode forward.

They rode down the hill, on the top of which they had paused.

They crossed a low place and then started up the other hill.

As they neared the top they slackened the speed of the horses.

They rode very slowly.

Dick was pretty sure he had seen horsemen outlined against the horizon, and he did not wish to allow himself and comrade to be taken unawares, in case there was an ambush ahead of them.

Dick could not think that there were redcoats in the vicinity, yet it was possible, he knew.

Therefore there was need for caution.

Presently they reached the top of the hill.

As they had not been accosted, the youths began to think their fears had been groundless.

They paused and listened for a few moments.

They could not hear a sound.

Everything was quiet; not a sound could be distinguished.

"I guess the coast is clear," said Bob, in a low tone; "don't you think so, Dick?"

"I guess so, Bob."

"Then, let's go on."

"Very well; but be watchful, Bob. We may run into a trap, if we are not careful."

"I am going to have my pistol in my hand, Dick. If any fellow bobs up in front of me he will bob down again, unless I am mightily mistaken!"

"I shall have a pistol in readiness, too, Bob."

The two rode slowly forward.

The road in front sloped downward.

They made their way along.

There were trees on either side.

This made it quite dark in the road.

Had there been a party wishing to ambush the youths, here would have been a fine place for the work, Dick thought.

This made him keep a sharp lookout.

He did not think any men could get to the side of his horse so quickly as to make it impossible for him to get away.

He was to find that for once he was wrong, however.

The youths had gotten perhaps halfway down the hill when they were suddenly treated to an unpleasant surprise.

Something caught them across their chests and jerked them off the backs of the horses!

CHAPTER III.

PRISONERS.

The something was a rope.

It had been stretched across the road purposely.

Those who had tied the rope there had succeeded their purpose.

Dick and Bob had not been expecting anything like this.

They were taken wholly by surprise and were off the horses and flat on their backs, in the middle of the road almost before they could realize what had happened.

As they fell, dark forms rushed out from among the trees.

Then a dozen men leaped upon the two youths before they could rise to their feet.

Dick and Bob had been somewhat jarred and confused by their fall, and the peculiar manner in which it had been caused, so were not in a condition to offer as effective resistance as they otherwise might have done.

They did the best they could, however.

They started in to struggle.

The youths were strong, athletic fellows, but were taken at a terrible disadvantage.

Had they succeeded in gaining their feet before the men reached them they would have put up a strong fight.

But the men were upon them before they could do so.

The result was what might have been expected.

The youths were overpowered with comparative ease and quickness.

Almost before they knew it they were prisoners.

The men had come well prepared.

They had brought some short pieces of rope with which they bound the youths' arms.

A couple of the fellows took the bridle reins and led the youths' horses into the edge of the timber, the other men following, with the prisoners in their midst.

They followed a sort of path which wound through the timber.

They seemed perfectly familiar with the path, for they had no difficulty in following it, dark as it was.

They kept on for perhaps ten minutes.

Then they came out into an open space about an acre in extent.

At the farther side of the open space stood a log cabin.

The little party walked across the open space and paused in front of the cabin.

One of the men lighted a torch.

This had been prepared, also, in advance.

The torch blazed up revealing the features of the youths' captors.

Dick took a quick survey of the men's faces. He wished to see if he knew any of them. A glance was sufficient to show him that he did. He recognized three or four of them. They were Tory neighbors who had lived near Dick's and Bob's home for years. In fact, three of the men had been in the party that had come to Dick's home on that terrible morning when Mr. Slater had been shot dead in his own dooryard. One of these, an ugly-faced ruffianly looking fellow, whose name was Hank Jones, had, Dick remembered, made threats that he would avenge the death of Hank Scroggs, the Tory who had shot Dick's father, and whom Dick had mortally wounded, with a bullet from his father's rifle, a few moments later. Hank Jones and Hank Scroggs had been near neighbors. They had been men of the same type, both ruffians by nature. They had been known as "the two Hanks," and had been engaged in many a shady transaction together. They had been the leaders of the Tory element of the vicinity, since the beginning of the war, up to the time that Scroggs met his death. Then Jones had become the leader. He and his band of Tories had committed numerous depredations in the vicinity. Of course, they had selected patriot families, always. They would decide upon a certain family, and would visit the family's home in the dead of the night and take everything they could lay hands on. Dick was well aware of this. Only that evening, at the supper-table, he had made inquiries regarding this matter, and had been told all about the manner in which Jones and his gang had been carrying matters in such high-handed fashion. Knowing that Jones and his gang were very much on the desperado order, Dick realized that he and Bob were in considerable danger. He did not let on that he recognized Jones, however. He made up his mind to let Jones and his gang take the initiative. He would let them do the leading and he would govern his talk and actions by theirs. The fellows who had led the horses tied them to trees just back of the cabin, and then rejoined the other members of the gang. Jones approached the youths. He paused right in front of Dick. He looked the youth straight in the eyes. "Look at me," he said.

"I see you," replied Dick, quickly. "Oh, ye do!" "Yes." "We couldn't very well help it," said Bob; "seeing as how you have stuck your ugly mug right in our faces." "You shut up!" growled Jones. "Nobody was talkin' to ye." "I guess you're right about that," said Bob, coolly; "from the looks of you, I should judge that you are as near like nobody as any one could be." A growl of anger escaped the Tory leader. Something that sounded very much like an imprecation escaped his lips. He drew his big fist back as if about to strike Bob. The youth did not flinch. He held his head perfectly still and gazed straight into the man's eyes. "I'll knock the head off of ye, ye sassy young scoundrel, ef ye don't keep thet mouth of your'n shet!" the ruffian growled. "Oh, of course," said Bob; "that would be just like you. You're just about courageous enough to hit a fellow whose hands are tied. You know he can't strike back." The man hesitated. He seemed to be on the point of striking Bob, but presently thought better of it. He dropped his arm to his side. Then he turned his attention to Dick. "Ever see me before?" he asked. "Oh, yes," replied Dick, "I've seen you before." "Ye know me, then?" "Yes, I know you." "Who am I?" "A candidate for the hangman's noose," interpolated Bob. Dick made a gesture for Bob to remain silent. "You are Hank Jones." "That's right. An' I used ter have er pard. His name was Scroggs. Do ye remember him?" Jones' tone was fierce and threatening. A peculiar glint came into Dick's eyes. His face hardened. His tone was even and calm, however, as he said: "Yes, I remember Hank Scroggs." "I should think ye would." This was said in a significant tone of voice. "You are right," remarked Dick, in a voice that was coldly calm. "The scoundrel killed my father." "An' ye killed Hank!" The man's tone was hoarse from anger.

"And I'm glad of it!"

There was a fierceness in Dick's tone that showed he meant what he said.

"Yer glad uv et, ye say?"

"I am."

"Glad that ye murdered Hank, air ye?"

"I did not murder him."

"Ye didn't?"

"I did not."

"I don't know what ye would call et, then."

"I was justified in killing him; I simply did my duty. He was the murderer, for he shot my father down without cause or provocation."

"Thet may be the way ye look at et."

"It certainly is the way I look at it. I have never had the least qualm of conscience on account of having killed the man. He was a murderer and deserved death. I was simply the executioner."

"Waal, ye kin look at et enny way ye want to. I don't look at et thet way."

"I suppose not."

"I sartinly don't. Hank wuz my pard. Ye killed him, an' I swore I would have revenge."

The man's tone was fierce.

He glared at Dick, ferociously.

"So I understood," remarked Dick, quietly. "I heard that you had threatened that you would have revenge on me for killing your friend."

If Dick was alarmed, he did not show it.

And doubtless he was alarmed.

He certainly must have felt some misgivings.

Jones and the gang with him were capable of anything, Dick knew.

Nearly all the crimes on the calendar could be charged up against them.

Jones, especially, had an unsavory record.

He had committed two or three murders, and would not hesitate to kill Dick if he took the notion.

Dick was aware of this, but it did not seem to have any effect upon him.

Outwardly, he was calm and unconcerned.

To tell the truth, although well satisfied that he and Bob were in great danger, it was not the thought of this that caused him the most trouble.

What worried him more than anything else was the fact that they were being delayed.

Every minute that they were being kept here would make it that much more difficult for them to reach General Schuyler on time with the message, even if they succeeded in escaping.

For, even though they were now apparently in desperate straits, Dick was figuring on making their escape.

"Yas," said Jones, in response to Dick's last remark, did swar thet I would hev revenge, an' I allus keeps word. I hev been a long time gittin' aroun' to et, but I got ye now, an' afore I git through with ye, I think en T body would be willin' ter acknowledge thet I've hed e venge, good and plenty."

There was a deadly ring to the man's voice now, th proved he meant what he said.

Dick did not quail.

He met the man's gaze calmly and unflinchingly.

"You seem to have the whip hand now," he said. "I in your hands, a prisoner, and there's nothing to preve you from doing as you please with me."

"Thet's one time ye told the truth. I've got ye w I kin do what I please with ye, an' ye kin bet thet I am goin' to please ter git squar' with ye fur killin' Hank."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"Whut am I goin' ter do?"

"Yes,"

"Waal, I hev'n't decided yit. We hev er little sumthi else ter do first, an' then I'll make up my mind."

He turned to his men.

"Dick, you and Bill s'arch them young fellers," he ordered. "S'arch thet one," pointing to Dick, "keerfully; think ye'll find a bit uv paper in his inside coat pocket th General Clinton, down to New York, will be mighty gla to git hold uv."

Dick could hardly refrain from giving utterance to a exclamation.

The Tory's remark proved that he had knowledge of the fact that the youths were messengers.

Dick wondered how the fellow had learned this.

It was a puzzle how the fellow had done so.

It was really very simple.

Jones was the man who had looked around the corner of the house when Dick and Bob first arrived at Bob's home and were being greeted by their loved ones.

He had heard Dick say that he and Bob were messengers, and that they were carrying a message to General Schuyler.

But, of course, Dick did not know the man had overheard him make the statement.

Consequently he was puzzled to know how the man had learned so much.

He had not much time for thought, for the two men spoken to by Jones advanced and began searching himself and comrade.

CHAPTER IV.

HELP ARRIVES WHEN LEAST EXPECTED.

The man who was searching Dick plunged his hand into the inside pocket of Dick's coat.

When he withdrew his hand it held a folded paper.

"Here's ther dockyment, Hank," he said. "Ye wuz ght about et."

Jones stepped forward and took the paper out of the man's hand.

He held it near the light and read the address.

"This is et, shure enough," he said. "Et's addressed er Ginerel Schuyler, but instid uv goin' ter Ginerel Schuyler et will go ter Ginerel Clinton."

Jones chuckled as he said this.

He looked at Dick to see how the youth liked it.

Dick did not like it at all.

He did not allow the state of his feelings to show in his expression, however.

Dick was determined they should not have that pleasure.

Jones stuck the paper in his pocket and watched the men as they proceeded with the search.

The two fellows rifled Dick's and Bob's pockets and also relieved them of their pistols.

When this had been done, Jones turned to one of the men and said:

"Bill, go get that rope."

The man spoken to opened the door of the cabin and entered.

A few moments later he reappeared.

In his hand he held a coil of rope.

He handed the rope to Hank Jones.

Jones uncoiled the rope.

Then, slowly and deliberately, he proceeded to rig a hangman's noose.

When he had finished he stepped forward and placed the noose around Dick's neck.

He adjusted the noose so that the knot was under Dick's left ear.

He pulled up on the rope hard enough so that it choked Dick slightly.

"How do you like ther feel of that?" Jones asked.

He leered at Dick as he spoke.

Dick knew that the fellow was trying to inspire him with a feeling of terror, and then gloat over him.

The youth was determined to afford the scoundrel no satisfaction whatever.

So he answered, coolly and calmly:

"I can't say that I like the feel of it very well. I should judge, however, that it feels about the same that it will feel to you when the hangman puts the noose around your neck."

A curse escaped the fellow.

"Ye think yer smart, don't ye?" he growled.

"No, I can't say that I do. You asked me a question and I simply answered it, that is all."

"Thet's all right. Ye think yer smart, but I'll take some uv ther smartness out uv yer."

"Perhaps so."

"There hain't no perhaps erbout et. I'm ergoin' ter hang ye. I swore thet I would hev revenge on yer fur killin' Hank, an I'm ergoin' ter do et."

"It seems to be within your power to do so, if you choose."

"Yer right, an' I'm ergoin' ter string ye up right erway, an' hev done with et."

He looked around.

"There's er limb thet will do first rate," he remarked.

Then to the two fellows, who had Dick by the arm, he said:

"Lead him over under thet limb, boys."

The men obeyed.

Jones walked in advance and carried the rope.

The limb was about twelve feet from the ground.

Jones made an expert cast and threw the rope over the limb.

He pulled the rope down until it was drawn taut.

"This way, a half dozen of ye!" he called to the men.

Five or six of the men hastened forward.

"Take hold of this rope!" Jones ordered.

The men obeyed.

Jones looked at Dick, with a triumphant leer.

A ferocious glare was in his eyes.

Dick met the man's look unflinchingly.

The youth realized that he was in deadly danger.

He knew that the Tory leader was in earnest.

Dick felt that unless help came the fellow would surely hang him.

But where was help to come from?

Dick could think of no possible direction from which aid might come.

It seemed to him as if, for once, he and his comrade had gotten into a difficulty from which there was no escape.

Things looked dark.

Still he did not despair.

Youth and hope go hand in hand.

Dick was young, and had had so many narrow escapes during the time that he had been acting as messenger

and spy, that he would not give up until the last moment. Something might turn up.

For several minutes Dick had been busily at work trying to loosen the bonds which bound his arms.

He had succeeded in loosening the ropes slightly, but not sufficient to allow of his withdrawing his hands.

If he could succeed in freeing his arms he would make a desperate attempt to escape.

He feared that he would not be able to accomplish this, however.

And Bob?

When the rope was placed around Dick's neck and the men led him over and placed him underneath the limb, Bob struggled like a madman.

He kicked, jerked, lunged and even bit at the men holding him.

He did not utter a word.

He simply gritted his teeth and fought like a demon.

Had his arms been free the two fellows who had hold of him would have more than had their hands full.

They would not have been able to hold him.

With his arms bound, however, they were able to keep him under control.

When Bob found that he could not free himself, he desisted.

He realized that it was useless to tire himself out when he was unable to accomplish anything.

By this time the men had taken hold of the rope and everything was in readiness for the tragedy which was seemingly about to be enacted.

A sudden thought came to Bob.

Why not call out for help?

It might be possible that some one would be within hearing distance and come to their assistance.

Of course, this was only a bare possibility, but the chance was worth taking.

Bob filled his lungs with air, and then suddenly called out:

"Help! help! Murder! Help!"

Curses escaped Hank Jones and several of his men.

Cries of consternation escaped several of the others.

"Stop that fool's mouth!" cried Jones. "Don't let him howl like that any more."

One of the men who were holding Bob, placed his hand over the youth's mouth.

Then he suddenly gave vent to an unearthly howl.

"Ouch! Oh! Curses on ye, ye young tiger cat!" he cried. "Ye've bit my hand half in two!"

Bob had jerked his head back and bitten the fellow's hand, causing him to take it away in a hurry.

Then Bob gave vent to another cry.

"Help! help! Murder! Help!"

"Stuff something in the fool's mouth!" cried Jones. "Or hit him over the head with a pistol butt. Put a stop to his howling, somehow. If there's anybody within a mile, they'll hear him."

One of the fellows drew a handkerchief from his pocket and stuffed it in Bob's mouth.

The other—the one who had been bitten—drew his pistol and struck Bob a fairly hard blow on the head.

"Thet's fur a warnin'," he said. "Open yer head agin, an' I'll hit ye so hard ye won't know ennything fur an hour."

Of course, Bob could not yell again.

Luckily, however, it was not necessary that he should do so.

Although he did not know it, of course, his yells had already done the work.

The road which the youths had been following, when captured, was not more than a hundred and fifty yards distant from the cabin.

At the moment that Bob gave utterance to the first cry for help, a party of horsemen was riding along the road.

There were perhaps twenty in the party.

They were headed northward.

As the cry for help reached them, one of their number cried out:

"Halt! What was that?"

"Some one calling for help," said one of the men.

"Which direction did it seem to come from?"

"From over toward the right-hand side, it seemed to me."

"I thought it came from that direction. Let's listen a moment; maybe we will hear it again."

They listened a few moments.

Then they heard the cry again.

The trampling of the horses' feet had partially drowned the sound the first time.

This time, however, there was nothing to interfere, so they heard the cry quite plainly.

They had no difficulty in determining the direction from which the cry came.

"Dismount," said the leader. "We must see what is going on, and can make our way through the timber better afoot than on horseback."

As the leader spoke he leaped to the ground.

The other men followed suit.

They led their horses to one side and tied them to trees.

"Come," said the leader, "follow me and make as little noise as possible."

The men stole away through the timber.

The leader had kept the direction well in mind, and seemed to have no difficulty in making his way toward the point from which the cry had sounded.

He did not hesitate at all, but moved confidently forward.

They did not move very rapidly, but the distance was not great, so it took them only a comparatively short time to reach the edge of the opening in the timber.

They paused and took a survey of the situation.

By the light of a torch, which one of the Tories held, the newcomers were enabled to see what was going on.

They saw the group beneath the limb of the tree.

They could see that one of the members of the group was a prisoner.

They saw that his arms were bound together behind his back, that a rope was around his neck and that the rope had been thrown over the limb.

They saw that a number of the men had hold of the end of the rope.

It was not difficult, therefore, to understand matters.

They realized that some one was about to be hanged.

At the distance they could not distinguish faces, so had nothing to go by to enable them to form a judgment as to the merits of the affair.

For aught they knew to the contrary, the prisoner might be a horsethief or murderer.

He might deserve a hanging, twice over.

Then, again, he might be an honest man and his captors might be scoundrels.

In the latter case the leader of the second party felt that it would be the duty of himself and comrades to interfere and save the person's life.

But how were they to know?

There was only one way to find out.

That was by advancing and getting close enough so that they could see the faces of the prisoner and his captors, and, if possible, hear what was said.

This would enable them to get at the rights of the matter.

The leader gave the order to advance.

He gave the order, in a low tone, to the man beside him, this man communicated it to the one next to him, he to the next, and so on until all had received the order.

Then they stole forward across the open space.

They made scarcely any noise at all.

As they were shielded by the darkness, they had no difficulty in approaching to within a few yards of the party under the limb of the tree.

When as near as they thought they dared venture, they came to a stop.

They listened, attentively, to what was being said.

At that moment Hank Jones began addressing Dick.

"The time has come, Dick Slater," he said, in a fierce, deadly tone. "Ye killed my pard, Hank Scroggs. I swore I'd have revenge on ye, if ever I got ther chance, an' now ther chance has come. I hev ye in my power, an' I'm goin' ter hang ye!"

The leader of the party of men, hidden by the darkness, gave a start as he heard Dick's name.

"Can it be possible it is Dick!" he exclaimed to himself. "Jove! I'm glad we got here in time to save his life. That scoundrel Jones would have hanged him, sure enough."

"You seem to have it all your own way, Hank Jones," said Dick. "You have me in your power and can hang me, and I cannot help myself. There is one thing, however, which you can put in your pipe and smoke it, and that is this: I do not fear death. One has but one time to die, and I am not afraid to die; but I have two regrets, one, and the main one, is that I shall be unable to do any further work for the great cause of Liberty. The other is, that I should lose my life in such a manner and at the hands of such a scoundrel as you!"

Dick's closing words were brought out with an energy and fierceness that caused Jones to wince and shrink, thick-lidded though he was.

"So yer bound to be sassy ter ther last, air ye?" he growled. "Well, ye won't be that way much longer. I'll take that out uv ye in about ten seconds."

Then he turned to the men holding the rope.

"Up with him!" he ordered. "Pull! an', mind ye, don't let go uv ther rope till I tell ye!"

The men heaved back on the rope, but just before Dick was lifted from the ground there came an interruption.

"Hold, you cowardly scoundrels!" cried a loud, ringing voice. "Let go of that rope, or you are dead men!"

Then came the rush of many feet.

A score of dark forms leaped forth out of the darkness and pounced upon the amazed and startled Tories.

CHAPTER V.

THE MESSAGE DELIVERED.

The Tories had not been expecting anything of this kind, hence were taken entirely by surprise.

Being taken thus added greatly to the terror of the situation.

The men let go of the rope and took to their heels.

They had but followed the example set by their leader, however.

Like most bullies and men of their stripe he was a coward at heart.

He was the first man to run.

He broke and fled at the top of his speed.

The two Tories who were holding Bob let go of him and took to their heels.

So quickly did the Tories disappear that the newcomers did not get a chance to inflict any damage upon them.

They seemed determined to get some satisfaction out of it, however, for they drew their pistols and fired a volley into the darkness, in the direction taken by the Tories.

They never learned whether or not any of the shots took effect.

They heard one or two cries as of pain, however, so judged that one or two of the bullets had done some good.

The leader of the party hastened to Dick's side.

He took the noose from around Dick's neck and then drawing a knife severed the rope binding Dick's arms.

The Tory who had held the torch had thrown it down as he fled, but it gave considerable light from where it lay on the ground.

"Well, well, Dick, is it you!" exclaimed the man, taking Dick's hand and shaking it, heartily. "I'm glad to see you, but sorry that I found you in such a difficulty."

"Why, it's Tom Morris!" exclaimed Dick. "I guess you'll have no trouble in believing me when I tell you that I'm glad to see you, Tom."

"You're right, Dick; I can well believe that you are glad to see me."

"Indeed, I am. I am sure that had you not put in an appearance just when you did, I should be a dead boy at this very moment."

"There can be no doubt of it. Hank Jones would do anything."

"Yes. He has a grudge against me for the reason that I killed his friend, Hank Scroggs."

"I know, Dick; I heard all about that at the time. He came very near making his words good, too."

"Yes, but a miss is as good as a mile."

By this time Bob's arms had been freed.

"We had better be getting away from here, I think," said Tom Morris. "The first thing we know those scoundrels will sneak back here and fire a volley at us."

"That's right," agreed Dick. "Wait till Bob and I get our horses."

The youths started to where their horses were tied, but suddenly Dick paused and gave utterance to a cry of consternation

"The message!" he exclaimed. "That scoundrel took it

away from me and put it in his pocket. He has it now. Jove! I don't know what to do."

"What message was it?" asked Tom Morris.

"It was a message to General Schuyler."

"From General Washington?"

"Yes."

"And Jones took it away from you?"

"Yes; and now I don't know what to do. He is gone and I don't know where to look for him."

As Dick spoke, Bob stepped forward to a point a few feet beyond where the torch lay and picked up something from off the ground.

"Here it is, Dick!" he exclaimed. "Here's the message. It must have dropped out of that fellow's pocket when he started to run away."

A glance was all that was needed to assure Dick that Bob spoke the truth.

The paper which Bob had picked up was indeed the message.

Doubtless Jones had not placed the paper in his pocket securely, and when he leaped away so suddenly the paper fell out of the pocket.

At any rate, he had lost it and it was again in Dick's possession, so all was well.

Dick placed the message carefully in his pocket.

Then he turned to Tom Morris.

"How happens it that you came along just at this time, Tom?" he asked.

"We were out looking for Hank Jones and his gang, Dick."

"Oh, that was it!"

"Yes; they have been doing so much mean work around this neighborhood that we have decided to put a stop to it."

"I hope you will succeed."

"I hope so, too. And now that we have started in, we shall not stop until we have succeeded."

After some further conversation the party made its way toward the road.

The members of the party that had come to Dick's rescue were patriot farmers who lived in the vicinity.

They had been forced to club together and start on a campaign against Hank Jones and his gang of Tories.

This they had been forced to do in self-protection.

As it had turned out, it was lucky for Dick and Bob that they had been forced to do so.

All mounted their horses.

Then they set out in a northerly direction.

"We'll go with you quite a ways, Dick," said Morris.

"Jones and his gang might waylay you again and recapture you."

"Thank you," said Dick; "we shall be glad to have you accompany us as a bodyguard. It is important that this message be delivered on time, and I don't want to be delayed again."

The party rode on at a fairly rapid gait.

Morris and his men remained with Dick and Bob for an hour, at least.

"I don't think there is any danger that we might be delayed, now," said Dick, presently, "so you need not go any farther, Tom."

"I guess you will be safe now, Dick, so I judge that we may as well stop."

Dick and Bob bade Morris and his men good-by, and then rode onward, the others turning back.

The youths met with no further adventures during the trip to Albany, which point they reached late the following evening.

They inquired the way to the headquarters of General Schuyler.

They were soon there.

They entered the house and were ushered into the presence of the general.

The youths had never seen General Schuyler, so they regarded him with considerable interest.

They saw an old, white-haired man, thin-faced, but kindly looking.

"Is this General Schuyler?" asked Dick.

"It is," was the reply. "And you?"

"I am Dick Slater, and this is my friend, Bob Estabrook. We are messengers from the commander-in-chief."

"Ah, Dick! I have heard of you, and of your friend, as well," exclaimed General Schuyler. "I am indeed glad to see you!"

Then he shook hands, heartily, with both youths.

Dick drew the paper from his inside pocket.

"Here is the message, General Schuyler," he said.

The general took it from Dick's outstretched hand.

"Be seated," he said. "Excuse me while I read the message."

"Certainly," replied Dick.

He and Bob seated themselves.

General Schuyler also took a seat, and opening the message read it.

When he had finished he folded the message and placed it in a drawer of his desk.

"Very well; very good," he said, as if half to himself.

Then he turned his attention to Dick and Bob.

He asked the many questions regarding the situation of the patriot forces down in New Jersey, etc., etc., and Dick answered to the best of his ability.

Then General Schuyler asked the youths regarding their trip from New Jersey.

The three talked perhaps half an hour, and then after a brief period of silence, General Schuyler said:

"The commander-in-chief wrote me, in the message which you brought, to the effect that in case I wished, you two young men might remain with me for a little while and render me such assistance as may be within your power."

"We shall be pleased to do anything that we can do, General Schuyler," said Dick, promptly.

"Thanks, Dick. I knew, judging from what I have always heard of you, that you would be glad to do so."

General Schuyler was silent for a few moments, and presently he said:

"There is much trouble all up and down the valley of the Mohawk. Thayendanegea, the Scourge, has been committing depredations, has been murdering, pillaging, burning; he has caused a reign of terror. It might be possible that you can aid me in putting a stop to this work."

"We shall be only too glad to try, sir," said Dick.

"That is right," agreed Bob.

"I have a company of cavalry here," said the general, "and if it had the right kind of a commander it would be able to do good work, I am sure. The captain of the company was wounded and is unable to get out, and there is no one else to take his place. If you, Dick, would do so I should be glad to have you take command and go up the valley and see what you could do with Thayendanegea and his horde of red butchers."

"I shall be only too glad to accept the command, sir," said Dick, eagerly.

"Good! Just as soon as you have had sufficient rest you shall start on the expedition."

"We won't need very much rest."

"You should take two or three days' rest, anyhow."

"One day will be sufficient, General Schuyler; in fact, a good night's sleep will put us in good shape, and if it is important that this expedition be started at as early a date as possible, we will be ready to start in the morning."

"Day after to-morrow will be plenty soon enough, Dick. That will give you two full nights' rest, and to-morrow you can put in in getting acquainted with the men who are to be under you."

"Just as you say, General Schuyler. We will do as you say."

After some further conversation, General Schuyler asked the youths if they had had their supper.

Dick said that they had not yet had their suppers.

"Then you must dine with me," said General Schuyler.

"I had just finished my supper before you came; I will order the table to be reset, and there will be plenty of food, I am confident."

"You need not go to that trouble," said Dick. "We will go to a tavern and get our supper."

But General Schuyler insisted, and the result was that the youths took supper in General Schuyler's dining-room.

The general invited them to remain at his house, but they decided not to do so; and, thanking him for his kind invitation, made their way to a tavern not very far distant and engaged a room.

The youths had no baggage, so there was no necessity of going to their room at once.

They were tired, however, so did not delay long, and went to bed rather early.

The youths put in the next day getting acquainted with the members of the company of dragoons, which Dick was to command.

Nearly all the men had heard of Dick Slater, and were glad to know that he was to be their commander on the expedition.

All necessary preparations for the expedition were made during the day, as it was intended to start early next morning.

After supper that evening Bob suggested that they go out and take a look at the city.

"We've been busy all day, Dick," said Bob, "and haven't had time to see the place. Let's go out and circulate around for an hour or so, anyway."

"All right, Bob, I'm agreeable."

The youths then left the tavern and walked away, down the street.

Their desire to take a turn about the city was destined to have important results.

CHAPTER VI.

DICK AND BOB DO SOME SHADOWING.

The youths walked down the street a couple of blocks, and then they turned to the right and made their way down toward the river.

When they were about a block from the river, and just before they reached the corner at the cross street, Dick suddenly clutched Bob by the shoulder and pulled him back into the shadow cast by an old building which stood there.

"Listen!" whispered Dick.

Footsteps sounded close at hand.

They were coming up the cross street.

The sound of voices could be heard also.

Then a party of men came in view.

There were perhaps a dozen men in the party.

They were conversing in rather guarded tones.

There was something in the fellows' actions that attracted Dick's attention and caused him to become suspicious.

Then, too, he heard one of the men mention the name of General Schuyler.

This of itself was sufficient to excite interest in Dick's mind.

Who could the men be?

Why were they talking of General Schuyler?

If they were patriots and friends, of course there could be no harm in their discussing General Schuyler.

But what if they were not patriots and friends?

Somehow, Dick became imbued with the idea that they were not.

"Let's follow them, Bob," he whispered.

"What for, Dick? Do you think——"

"I don't think anything, Bob, but I more than half suspect those fellows are up to some wicked scheme."

"All right, Dick, let's follow them."

The youths stole after the men.

The street was not very well lighted.

Therefore, it was easy to follow without being in danger of being discovered.

The men made their way along a distance of two blocks, in the direction they had been going, and then turned to the left and went down toward the river.

They paused when they reached a large, ramshackly looking building a couple of hundred feet from the river.

The building did not look like a residence.

It had more the appearance of an old, deserted factory.

It was a large building, but there was not the least sign of a light to be seen anywhere.

This, of course, made it have a deserted appearance.

When the men paused in front of this building the youths paused also.

They were eager to see what the men intended doing.

The youths heard one of the men rap on the door.

A few moments later the door opened.

The men passed through the doorway and disappeared from sight.

Then the door was closed again.

"Well, we've run them to their hole, Dick," said Bob.

"So it seems, Bob."

"What are you going to do next?"

"I am going to enter that building."

"You want to find out what is going on in there, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I must acknowledge that I have some curiosity regarding the matter myself. I'm for getting in, if we can."

"We must get in, Bob."

"But how are we to do it?"

"That's the question. We must find a way, however."

"Well, you find the way and when you go in I'll be right with you."

"All right; come along."

The two advanced until they were in front of the building and then paused.

Dick cautiously tried the door.

It was locked.

This did not surprise Dick, however.

Nor was he particularly disappointed.

He had expected to find the door locked.

"Try a window," whispered Bob.

They made their way along the side of the building to where there was a window.

Dick tried the window.

It was fast.

"Let's keep on searching," whispered Bob; "perhaps we will find a window, after a while, that will open."

They made their way to still another window.

It, like the other one, was fast.

Again the youths moved forward, and, reaching the end of the building, turned the corner and moved along that side of the building.

There were four windows on this side, but all of them were fast.

Not one could be raised.

Presently they reached the next corner of the building, and, turning, found themselves at the rear.

There was a door and several windows at the rear, but all were fast.

Not one could be budged.

Presently the youths paused and stood still, taking stock of the situation.

"It begins to look as if we were not going to get in, Dick," said Bob, in a low tone.

"You are right, Bob; but we must get in, somehow."

Dick took several steps backward and looked up at the building.

He now noted, for the first time, the fact that there was a one-story shed-like addition to the building at the rear.

The roof of this part of the building sloped, but was not so very steep.

At the lower edge it was perhaps twelve feet from the ground.

Dick was confident that if they could once get on this roof they could easily climb it.

They would make the trial, anyway.

At a little distance stood a fairly good-sized tree.

Several of the limbs, as Dick noticed, extended out over the roof of the shed.

The means of reaching the roof of the shed was close at hand.

"Come!" whispered Dick.

He made his way to the tree.

Bob followed.

Dick quickly climbed up into the tree.

Bob did the same.

Dick then cautiously made his way out on the limb.

When he had reached a point well out over the roof of the shed he cautiously lowered himself.

He held to the limb until he had secured a good footing on the roof, and then he let go and climbed slowly and carefully upward till he came to the main building.

He reached it at a point where there was a window.

Dick lost no time in trying the window.

To his great satisfaction he had no trouble in opening the window.

He looked around and saw that Bob was following.

The night was fairly dark, but he could make out Bob's outlines at the distance which separated them.

A few moments later Bob was at Dick's side.

"Good!" he whispered. "You've got a window opened at last."

"Yes, there is nothing to hinder us from entering now, Bob. Follow me and make as little noise as possible."

Dick climbed through the window.

Bob followed suit.

They were now in intense darkness.

Dick realized that they would have to be very careful.

They were in strange territory.

There was no knowing what they might run into.

Dick did not hesitate, however.

He moved slowly and cautiously forward.

It was necessary that he should do so as he virtually had to feel his way.

Bob kept close behind him.

Dick had not gone far when he came to a wall.

He turned to the right and moved along the wall.

Presently he came to a door.

He took hold of the knob and turned it.

The door came open.

Dick crawled through the open doorway.

He paused and listened a few moments.

To the left-hand, somewhere in the distance, sounded the faint murmur of voices.

Dick believed that the voices were those of the men whom he and Bob had seen enter the building.

Dick rose to his feet and felt all around him.

He discovered that he was in a hallway.

As soon as he had made this discovery he made his way along the hall.

Dick headed in the direction from which the sound of voices had come.

Of course, he had to go slow as he had been doing.

Bob followed closely.

Dick paused frequently and listened.

Each time he paused the voices seemed to sound plainer.

Presently Dick came to a stop in front of a door.

A faint light shone underneath the bottom of the door.

The voices of the men could now be heard quite plainly.

Dick was sure that they were in the room into which this door opened.

He wished that he might be able to get a look into the room. He had a desire to see what sort of looking fellows they were.

Dick thought that he might be able to see through the keyhole.

He tried this and succeeded in getting a fairly good view of a portion of the room.

There were, perhaps, half a dozen men in the range of his vision.

They were roughly dressed, fierce-looking fellows.

They looked as if they were men capable of performing any kind of a deed.

Dick was sure he had never seen any of them before.

They were all strangers to him.

Dick wondered why these men were gathered here.

If possible, he would find out.

He took his eye away from the keyhole.

Then he placed his ear there.

He was delighted to find that he could understand what was being said.

The first words he heard were uttered in a rather commanding tone of voice, and Dick instantly decided that the owner of this voice was the leader of this band of men.

The words which Dick heard uttered were:

"We will now hear your report, Jordan."

"Very well," said another voice. "There isn't much to report. I had no difficulty in finding General Schuyler's headquarters."

"You found it, then?"

"Yes."

"Is it far from here?"

"Not very far. Not more than eight or ten blocks."

"And you can lead us to the place?"

"Without the least difficulty."

"Good! So far we have done well, and if our luck continues, before the rise of to-morrow's sun General Schuyler will be a dead man!"

CHAPTER VII.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

Dick was startled.

He had plainly heard what had been said.

He had understood every word.

There was no chance for a mistake.

It could mean only one thing.

That was that this band of men was plotting the death of General Schuyler.

Dick was thankful that he and Bob had happened along in time to shadow the fellows.

The men within the room went on with their conversation.

Dick listened eagerly.

It did not take him long to learn that there really was a scheme on foot to assassinate General Schuyler.

The men, he discovered, were Tories from the country west of Albany.

These deperate men seemed to think that by putting General Schuyler out of the way they would be accomplishing a great deal.

Dick listened to every word that was uttered.

In this way he learned their plan in detail.

The plan was as desperate as the men.

The Tories were going to wait till about two o'clock in the morning, then they were going to General Schuyler's headquarters, break down the door, rush in, assassinate the general and then get out and away again as quickly as possible.

They had learned that only two sentinels were on guard in front of the headquarters during the night, and these two men would be made way with, first of all.

There would then be nothing in the way, save the door, and this would be battered down with a sledge-hammer.

As Dick listened to the men's conversation, he realized the desperate character of the men.

He felt confident that they would hesitate at nothing.

He was thankful that he and Bob had stumbled upon the fellows.

Had they not done so the dastardly plot might have succeeded.

Now, however, it should not be allowed to succeed—not if Dick could help himself, and he thought he could.

The men were so interested in their talk that Dick felt safe in remaining at the door, so he kept his place.

Suddenly Dick was given a terrible start.

A loud “kerchew!” sounded in his ear.

Bob had given vent to a healthy sneeze.

The inclination to sneeze had come upon the youth so suddenly that he had had no time to try to fight it off.

That the sneeze had been heard by the men within the room was evident.

Exclamations escaped them.

“What was that?”

“There’s somebody in the hall.”

“Some one has been listening.”

Such were some of the cries given utterance to.

Then there was a rush of footsteps.

Dick had discounted this movement, however.

He realized, the instant Bob gave vent to the sneeze, the fact that it would be dangerous for himself and comrade to remain where they were an instant longer.

“Quick, Bob,” he whispered, “we must get away from here!”

Then he and Bob made their way back along the hall as rapidly as they could in the darkness.

They had gone several yards when the inmates of the room made their move to investigate the source of the sneeze.

The youths were not much more than half way back to the room, which they had entered from the roof of the shed at the rear, when the door opened and the Tories came pouring out into the hallway from the room in which they had been congregated.

The opening of the door lighted the hall in the vicinity of the doorway.

It made the hallway slightly lighter even where Dick and Bob were, and beyond them, and enabled them to move forward more rapidly.

To the Tories, however, who had just emerged from a lighted room, the hallway, save at a point right opposite the doorway, seemed intensely dark.

They did not see the youths.

They heard them, however.

Suddenly one cried out:

“There’s somebody yonder, I hear their footsteps!”

Then, with cries of anger, the Tories rushed along the hallway.

“Halt! Who is there?” cried a fierce voice, which Dick recognized as belonging to the leader of the Tories.

But the youths did not halt.

Neither did they stop to explain who they were.

They hastened forward with all possible speed.

They were not long in reaching the door opening into the room which they had entered from the roof of the shed at the rear.

They darted through the doorway.

As they did so cries went up from the Tories.

Their eyes had become adjusted to the darkness and they had caught a faint glimpse of the youths.

Dick quickly closed the door.

He slid his hand up and down the door and quickly succeeded in locating the bolt, which he shot into place.

Then the youths bounded across the floor.

Reaching the open window, they climbed hastily through.

Dick realized that there was need of haste.

He did not believe that the single bolt would hold the door against a dozen desperate men.

Therefore, his and Bob’s safety lay in getting away as quickly as possible.

They were not much more than fairly out on the shed roof when there came a crash.

The Tories had burst the door open.

The youths realized that there would be no time to exercise care in getting down off the roof.

So they let all holds go and slid down, quickly.

It was a fall of perhaps twelve feet.

The youths came down, with a thump.

They were jarred somewhat by the fall, but were not injured.

They leaped to their feet and were on the point of bounding away when a dozen human forms came tumbling down on top of them.

The youths were knocked down and almost flattened out. Fortunately, however, they were not injured.

They realized that they must get up and away immediately.

They threw aside the forms of those who had fallen on top of them and leaped to their feet.

Then they dashed away.

The Tories struggled to their feet and set out in pursuit.

It was quite dark and they could not see.

All they had to go by was the sound of the youths’ footsteps.

Instead of turning the corner of the building and starting back up into the city the youths headed toward the river.

They did not want to be seen by the Tories, if they could help it.

Dick wished to make the Tories think that he and Bob were; perhaps, only a couple of vagabonds who had been in the building for shelter.

If he could make them think this, they would probably go ahead with their attempt to assassinate General Schuyler.

On the other hand, if they should get the idea into their heads that the youths were spies, they would be afraid to try to put their scheme through.

Dick wished them to make the attempt.

It was his intention to return to General Schuyler's headquarters and tell him of the attempt that was to be made on his life.

It would be a very simple matter then to station forty or fifty soldiers near the building, and when the Tories appeared they could be captured.

The youths ran onward, rapidly.

They took chances in doing so, for they did not know what they might run into.

After them, as rapidly as possible, came the Tories.

It was not far to the river.

The youths soon reached the shore.

They turned and ran down the bank.

After them still came the Tories.

The youths could not see the Tories, but their hearing was good, and they could hear the patter of their feet.

The chase continued for quite a ways down the shore of the river.

The youths tripped and fell, several times, this being caused by the unevenness of the ground.

They were up and away again so quickly, however, that their pursuers did not profit much or gain anything on account of the youths' mishaps.

The fact was that the Tories tripped and fell, also, with quite as much frequency as did the youths.

Consequently, pursuers and pursued were about even with regard to time lost in this manner.

Dick and Bob were speedy runners.

They had proven this on many a past occasion.

They had proved this on many occasions where their life depended on their speed.

So far as that was concerned it was that way in the present instance.

There is no doubt that the Tories would have killed the youths had they caught them.

One look at the youths would have been sufficient to prove to the Tories that the young fellows were not vagabonds.

The Tories would then have set them down as spies.

Having decided that the youths were spies, the Tories would promptly have decided to put the youths out of the way.

Doubtless they would have tied them, hand and foot, and thrown them into the river.

But this was not to be.

The youths drew slowly but steadily away from their pursuers.

By the time they had gone a third of a mile down the river they were far enough ahead so that they thought it safe to take to the streets.

At a word from Dick, they turned to the right and ran up the slope.

They were soon threading a street.

They ran up the street a block and then turned to the left down another street.

They followed this street only a block.

Then they turned to the right again.

The youths' idea in turning so many corners was to keep the Tories from seeing them.

They ran in this direction a block, and then again turned to the right.

The street they were now on was one of the main streets of the city.

It was not yet late, and the street was thronged with people.

The youths felt that they were safe now.

They stopped running and dropped into a walk.

They knew that the Tories, even if they kept up the pursuit till this street was reached, could not possibly pick out the two fugitives whom they had been chasing.

"Well, we're all right now, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, but it was a close call, Bob."

"So it was. Those fellows would have made it unpleasant for us if they had caught us."

"I have no doubt of it. They would probably have put us out of the way."

"That's right; I'm glad they didn't catch us. But what are you going to do now, Dick?"

"I'm going straight to General Schuyler."

"I understand. You're going to tell him of the plot against his life, eh?"

"Yes, indeed, Bob."

"Good! I hope we will be able to arrange some kind of a scheme that will enable us to capture that entire gang of Tories."

"I think we will be able to manage it, Bob. The only thing I am afraid of is that they may take the alarm and give up the idea of trying to put their plan into execution."

"I hardly think they'll do that, Dick. If they had got their eyes on us and sized us up as being spies, they would, no doubt, give it up; as it is, however, they will probably think that we were a couple of vagabonds, who happened to be sleeping in the building, and they will not suspect that the news of their intended attempt to assassinate General Schuyler will become known."

"I hope it will be that way, Bob."

The youths made their way along at a rapid pace.

It did not take them long to reach General Schuyler's headquarters.

A few moments later they were ushered into his presence.

The general was surprised to see the youths again so soon.

He saw by the looks on their faces that something of importance had brought them.

"What is it, Dick?" he asked. "What has happened?"

"We have made an important discovery, General Schuyler," said Dick.

"An important discovery?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"We have discovered that there is a plot on foot to assassinate you, General Schuyler!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOULD-BE ASSASSINS FOILED.

The general leaped to his feet in astonishment.

There was a startled look on his face.

"A plot to assassinate me!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, general."

"Surely there must be some mistake, Dick. Who would try to assassinate me?"

"The Tories."

"Tories?"

"Yes."

"You have seen and heard something. Tell me what."

"Very well, sir, I will do so."

Then Dick told what he and Bob had seen and heard. General Schuyler listened, attentively.

He was greatly interested.

He realized now that there really was a scheme afoot to put him out of the way.

He realized, also, that but for the youths the scheme might have succeeded.

Such a thing as that he might be in danger had never entered his mind.

The plan of the Tories, desperate as it was, would have stood a good chance of succeeding had not the youths discovered the existence of the plot.

He asked Dick a number of questions.

When he had become possessed of a knowledge of the plot, in all its details, General Schuyler gazed down at the floor for nearly a minute.

He was in a deep study.

Presently he looked up.

"We must capture those scoundrels!" he said, in a determined voice.

"So we must," agreed Dick.

"Yes—or kill them," said Bob.

"The amendment is accepted," remarked General Schuyler, with a smile. "We will either capture them or kill them."

Then he suggested the plan that had occurred to Dick.

Fifty or a hundred men would be concealed near the front of the building, and when the Tories put in an appearance it would be an easy matter to surround and capture them.

Dick asked, as a favor, that the men who were to go with him on the morrow should be chosen for the work of effecting the capture of the Tories.

General Schuyler agreed.

The affair was talked over in all its details.

General Schuyler gave Dick full instructions.

Then he placed the matter entirely in Dick's hands.

He told Dick just what to do, and left it for him to do it. He had never seen the youth until the day before, but he had heard a great deal about him and had every confidence that he could not place the management of this affair in better or safer hands.

At last, when they had finished talking the matter over, Dick and Bob withdrew.

They went at once to the quarters occupied by the members of the company of dragoons.

It did not take Dick long to acquaint the men with the character of the work which he wished them to undertake that night.

The men seemed glad of the opportunity for getting out and doing something.

"We've been cooped up here so long," said one, "that it will do us good to do a little something like this."

A number of the others said the same.

Preparations for the work were at once begun.

The men looked to their weapons.

At last everything was in readiness.

All they would have to do now was to await the coming of the hour when the attempt to assassinate General Schuyler was to be made.

Waiting was no easy task, however.

It was tedious and tiresome work.

The time passed very slowly, indeed.

Dick waited until nearly midnight, and then, fearing that the Tories might make the attempt earlier than they had figured on doing, he gave the order to move.

A few minutes later the men were out on the street.

The quarters they occupied were about five blocks from the house occupied by General Schuyler.

Dick led the way, and the party moved slowly down the street.

There was nobody save themselves abroad.

The streets were deserted.

The party did not move very rapidly, Dick not considering it necessary.

Dick did not think that the Tories would make the attack before two o'clock, the time decided upon.

But in this he was mistaken.

When they turned the corner of the street, at a point a half block distant from General Schuyler's house, they saw a dozen or more figures stealing across the street at a point opposite the house.

The figures could be seen but dimly, but somehow Dick jumped to the conclusion that it was the party of Tories.

The Tories had decided to make the attack at an earlier hour, after all.

So Dick reasoned, at any rate.

"Forward!" said Dick, in a low tone. "There are the scoundrels now!"

He leaped forward as he spoke and ran with all his might.

Bob and the men followed closely.

They made as little noise as possible.

They wished to get as close to the Tories as they could before being discovered.

The Tories did not have as far to go as Dick's party, however, and they reached the front door of General Schuyler's house while Dick and his men were yet perhaps fifty feet distant.

Dick and his men were now advancing at a run.

Dick realized that unless they hastened, the Tories would succeed in breaking into the house before they could be reached and prevented from doing so.

When Dick and his comrades were yet thirty feet distant, there came a loud crash.

The Tories had burst the door open.

Dick did not wish to let the Tories enter the house, so he cried out, in a loud, ringing voice:

"At them, men! Down with the scoundrels! Kill or capture every one of them! Don't let a man escape!"

This was the first intimation the Tories had of the presence of Dick and his men.

They were taken entirely by surprise.

They turned and quickly saw that they were outnumbered at least six to one.

The leader of the Tories seemed to realize that their plan of assassinating General Schuyler would have to be abandoned.

He was shrewd enough to realize that they would have all they could do to escape capture.

He gave a quick, sharp command:

"Away, everybody!" he cried. "Break through their lines and escape, if you can!"

The men obeyed the order instantly.

They leaped forward and attempted to force their way through the ranks of the patriot soldiers.

They were desperate men, but they did not stand much chance against such a superior force.

Dick and his men braced themselves and hurled the Tories back, with considerable force.

Then they closed in on them still more.

"Surrender!" cried Dick. "Surrender, or you are all dead men!"

"Don't surrender!" cried the leader of the Tories. "They'll hang us if we do! Fight to the death!"

The Tories drew their pistols now, but before they could use them Dick and his men had leaped forward.

The Tories struggled fiercely after being seized by Dick's men, but they could do nothing.

They were outnumbered so greatly that they were quickly borne to the sidewalk.

Dick had no ropes with which to bind the Tories, but there were so many of his men that ropes were not necessary.

He ordered that three or four of the men hold each of the Tories.

This was done.

At this moment General Schuyler, an orderly, and several servants appeared at the open doorway.

The servants were badly frightened.

General Schuyler, however, was calm and cool.

"Have you succeeded in capturing all of them, Dick?" he asked.

"Yes, General Schuyler, not a single one got away."

"Good! I'm glad of that. It will teach the rascals a

lesson, and will have the effect of discouraging any more attempts of the same kind by others of their ilk."

"So it will," agreed Dick.

"The fellows made the attempt earlier than was expected, Dick. How comes it that you happened to be here?"

"The thought struck me that they might make the attempt at an earlier hour, so we came earlier. We got here only just in time, as they broke the door down before we could reach them."

"Well, I am exceedingly glad that you captured the scoundrels. It will have a good effect, I am sure."

"It was a desperate attempt, General Schuyler."

"So it was—a desperate attempt by desperate men."

Then the general told Dick to conduct the prisoners to the city jail.

This was done, and an hour later the Tories were resting securely behind prison bars.

They were sullen and uncommunicative.

The only words spoken were by one of the fiercest-looking of the lot, who made threats that if ever he escaped he would make it his especial business to have revenge on Dick.

This man was the leader of the Tories.

Of course, Dick thought nothing of the matter.

He looked upon them as merely the idle threats of a disappointed man.

Dick, Bob and the soldiers now returned to their quarters.

They had done their work and were ready to rest.

They threw themselves down in their bunks and were soon asleep.

Dick and Bob awoke to find themselves famous next morning.

The story had gotten out regarding how they had discovered the plot against the life of General Schuyler.

The story had not suffered in the telling.

The morning paper—or rather, an extra issue of the weekly paper, gotten out for the special purpose, gave a glowing account of the entire affair.

Dick and Bob were given great credit as having discovered the plot, and their names were in every one's mouth.

The youths modestly disclaimed credit, however.

Dick merely laughed when shown the article in the paper, and said that he had merely done his duty.

He had something else to think of, anyway.

He had work before him.

They were to start upon the expedition up into the Mohawk valley on this morning.

As soon as he had had his breakfast, Dick hastened to General Schuyler's headquarters and got his final instructions.

At the end of half an hour he bade General Schuyler good-by and hastened back to where his men were awaiting him.

"Is everything all right, Dick?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Everything is all right, Bob."

"And we are to go on the expedition?"

"We are."

"Hurrah! That is good! We will make things lively for the reds and whites when we get up into the Mohawk valley. We will put a stop to the depredations of the Indians and Tories, or know the reason why."

"We will do our best, Bob."

And then Dick gave the command to mount.

The dragoons did so.

Fifteen minutes later the party rode out of Albany and headed to the westward in the direction of the Mohawk valley.

CHAPTER IX.

IN A FIX

"I see smoke, Bob."

"Where, Dick?"

"Yonder; don't you see it?"

"No."

"Look through between those two trees and over toward the other side of the hollow. You'll see the smoke if you look closely."

Dick indicated the direction by pointing.

Dick Slater, Bob Estabrook and a hundred dragoons had reached a point in the heart of the Mohawk valley.

It was three days since they had left Albany.

They had established an encampment, which would be used as headquarters during their stay in that part of the country.

The encampment was on a little knoll, covered with rocks and trees.

It was a sort of natural fortification.

There was plenty of grass for the horses and a large, natural spring which furnished plenty of water for both men and animals.

It was now the middle of the afternoon.

Dick and Bob were out on a scouting expedition.

Dick wished to learn the lay of the land.

He wished to acquire all the information possible.

It was his belief that Thayendanegea and his Indians and the Tories were not far distant.

He wished to locate them and then strike them a severe blow.

And now, from the top of a high hill, a mile or so from their encampment, Dick had discovered smoke.

Where there is smoke there must be some fire, and fire would have to be kindled by human hands.

Dick was confident they would find some of the people they were looking for not far from the fire.

"Oh, yes, I see the smoke now, Dick," said Bob. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to investigate and see who are down there."

"All right; I'm right with you, Dick."

"Good! Come along, Bob."

The two made their way forward.

Their course led them down a slope and into a deep hollow.

The trees and underbrush were thick, thus affording the youths ample concealment.

When they reached the bottom of the hollow they proceeded with more caution.

The youths were experts at this kind of work.

The Indians themselves could not excel Dick and Bob in woodcraft.

The youths moved slowly forward, making no more noise than two shadows.

Occasionally they paused and listened.

Presently they were almost across the hollow.

Dick was sure they must be close to the point where they had seen the smoke.

It soon proved that this was the case.

They presently came to a point where they could look out into a little open space.

It was a sort of dell.

It was perhaps a hundred yards long and fifty yards wide.

Near the centre the fire was burning.

Seated about the fire, but at a sufficient distance to be out of range of the heat, were twelve persons.

There were six Indians and six white men.

Of the white men, five looked as if they were Tories, but the sixth was a British officer.

One of the Indians, who had the appearance of being a chief, was conversing with the officer.

The other Indians and the Tories were smoking and taking things easy.

Dick knew that he had stumbled upon a conference of some kind, between the Indians and Tories and the British, through the English officer, the representative of the redcoats.

The youth would have given much to overhear what was said.

This was something impossible of accomplishment, however.

The officer and chief were fifty or sixty feet distant from the nearest tree, and this was too far for Dick to understand what was said, acute as was his hearing.

He and Bob could hear the murmur of voices, but could not distinguish words.

Dick hardly knew what to do.

He watched the Indians and Tories closely, but pondered the situation.

What should he do?"

Presently he came to a decision.

He made a sign to Bob and stole away.

Bob followed.

When they were at a safe distance, Bob drew alongside Dick and asked:

"What are you going to do now, Dick?"

"Going to capture those fellows, if possible, Bob."

"We ought to be able to do it easily enough."

"We have numbers sufficient, Bob. The trouble is, that the Indians and Tories may get through with their conference with that redcoat and get away before we can get our men and get back."

"They may not be in any hurry to get away, Dick."

"I hope not; but let us hasten."

The youths walked rapidly up the slope and made their way as rapidly as possible in the direction of their encampment.

Ten minutes later they reached there.

Dick quickly told the men what he and Bob had discovered.

He told them to get ready at once.

The men were glad of the chance to accomplish something.

They leaped up, instantly, and seized their weapons.

"Come!" said Dick; "follow me. We will have to exercise great care when we get close to where the Indians and Tories are. Otherwise they will discover that we are coming, and will make their escape."

The men understood this, and said they would be very careful.

The party set out.

Dick and Bob led the way.

The men kept close behind.

When they had descended half way down into the hollow where the Indians and Tories had been seen by Dick and Bob, Dick called a halt.

The smoke was visible from where the party was.

Dick pointed to the smoke.

"Our game is there," he said; "now, my idea is that it will be a good plan to surround the Indians and Tories. In order to do so we will have to make a large circle and

gradually draw it in and make it smaller; in that way, if they should try to escape, we will be able to head them off."

"That's a good scheme, Dick," said Bob.

The other men all said the same.

The plan of procedure having been decided upon, Dick ordered the movement to begin at once.

The men began filing away to the right and to the left.

Dick instructed them to move in a half circle until the heads of the two columns came together, over beyond the camp of the Indians and Tories.

The camp would then be encompassed by a living cordon.

Then the advance would begin.

Unless the Indians and Tories had already gone, they would, in this manner, inevitably be captured.

It would be impossible to escape.

Dick waited until he was sure the men had had plenty of time to execute the maneuver.

Then he gave the order to begin the advance.

This was done.

Slowly the men moved forward.

The farther forward they moved the closer together the men came, as the circle narrowed and became smaller.

Each man could see the one at his right hand and at his left, and thus all knew that the movement was being made in accordance with Dick's instructions.

The circle grew smaller and smaller.

Presently the men came to the ends of the little dell, and here they had to pause and wait for their comrades to advance to the edge of the dell at the sides; the dell being about one hundred yards long and only about fifty yards wide.

Presently the men occupied positions at the edge of the dell for the entire distance around it.

To Dick's great delight the Indians and Tories and the British officer were still there.

The officer and the Indian chief were still engaged in conversation.

"They must be discussing something of importance," Dick thought.

He decided to break into their conversation.

He knew that his men were all ready and waiting for the signal.

He decided to give it.

He drew his sword with his right hand, while with his left he drew a pistol.

Suddenly he leaped out into the open space.

"Forward, men!" he cried, in a loud, ringing voice.

"Forward, all!"

As he spoke he leaped forward and ran toward the Indians and Tories.

The latter were taken entirely by surprise.

They leaped to their feet, with cries of consternation.

Their faces were toward Dick.

They saw the men emerging from the timber and following their young leader, and, realizing that the force would be too large for them to show fight against, they turned to flee in the opposite direction.

Here they met with a shock.

Men were coming from that direction, also.

They realized that they were surrounded.

They saw that every avenue of escape was cut off.

Their only chance to get away would be by cutting their way through.

They hesitated and wavered.

At this instant Dick cried out:

"Surrender! Throw down your arms and surrender, or you are dead men!"

There is no doubt that the Indians and Tories were desperate men.

With anything like a chance for making their escape they would, no doubt, have made the attempt.

They were outnumbered so greatly, however, that they decided not to risk it.

They raised their hands above their heads, with the palms extended toward Dick.

"We surrender!" cried the British officer. "Don't shoot!"

Dick and his men closed in on the Indians and Tories and relieved them of their weapons.

They disarmed the British officer, also.

Then they proceeded to bind the arms of the prisoners.

While engaged in this work the soldiers became a little bit careless and one of the Indians, seizing a favorable opportunity, broke away and darted toward the timber.

He had only about twenty yards to go, and so quick were his movements, so unexpected was his action, that he had gained the timber before a move could be made to prevent him.

"After him! Don't let him escape!" cried Dick.

Several of the soldiers leaped away in pursuit of the Indian.

They returned, ten or fifteen minutes later, empty-handed.

They had not been able to overtake the redskin.

Dick was somewhat chagrined on account of the Indian's escape, but it was already done and could not be helped, so there was no use grieving over it.

They had made a very good haul, anyway.

They had captured eleven, and among the eleven were a chief and a British officer.

There was really no reason to complain.

Dick now gave the order and they started on their return to the encampment.

Twenty minutes later they were in the camp.

The prisoners were tied to trees.

"Now," said Dick to Bob, "if I can only get that British officer to talk, I may be able to learn something."

"True enough, Dick, but I think you will have hard work getting him to talk. He looks like a stubborn rascal."

"You are right. Perhaps he will be willing to talk, however."

Dick made his way over to where the officer was stationed, and engaged him in conversation.

The redcoat was sullen.

He refused to answer many of the questions, and what ones he did answer, Dick believed to be falsely answered.

Then he tried the Indian chief.

He had no better success here.

The chief could talk very good English, but he gave Dick no satisfaction.

Bob, who had stood near and listened to everything that was said, was very angry.

"I'll tell you what to do, Dick," he said; "put ropes around the rascals' necks and pull them up to a limb a few times and let them down again. Then if they still refuse to talk, hang them for good. I think they will talk, all right."

"That's a good suggestion, Bob; I think I will put it into practice. I wish to know what they were planning down there in the hollow, and I think myself that rather than be hung they will be willing to talk."

Then Dick called for a couple of ropes.

"Bring the chief and the redcoat over here under this tree," he ordered.

Several of the men leaped to obey the order.

They brought the two prisoners in question and stationed them beneath the tree.

At this instant a scout, from the ranks of Dick's men, rode up and stopped in front of the youth.

"The Indians and redcoats are all around us! We are in a bad fix!" the scout said.

"We have a chief and one of the British officers prisoners," said Dick, "also some more Indians and Tories, and we may be able to make terms with our enemies."

CHAPTER X.

DICK MEETS THAYENDANEGBA.

Dick asked the scout a number of questions.

He asked the questions rapidly and eagerly.

He learned that the Indians and redcoats, as well as some Tories, were closing in on them.

They were surrounding the knoll on which he had made the camp.

The scout said he did not think they could escape, and get away, now, as the enemy had completely encircled the knoll.

This being the case, there was but one thing to do:

That was to prepare for a siege.

Dick had one hundred men, all good and true, and veterans.

He felt that he would be able to stand the enemy off for a considerable length of time, even though outnumbered five to one.

"This is what comes from allowing that Indian to escape, back yonder, a while ago," said Dick. "If he had not got away they would not have known where to look for us. He went straight to his friends and gave the alarm."

"That's about the way of it, Dick," agreed Bob. "That was a bad piece of business, letting him get away."

"So it was; but it can't be helped now."

The Indian chief and the British officer were delighted

"Aha! my bold, young friend!" exclaimed the officer. "You haven't things so much your own way as you thought for. Our men will soon be here and they will speedily make prisoners of all of you, or kill you if you resist."

But they did not know Dick Slater.

"We'll see about that," he said.

Then he ordered that the prisoners be taken back and tied to the trees.

This was done.

When Dick told his men that they were surrounded by a superior force of Indians, Tories and redcoats, they looked sober, but did not seem to be dismayed.

Dick asked them which they would rather do, surrender and take their chances, or stand a siege and fight to the death.

They were unanimous in wishing to stand the siege and fight to the last gasp, in preference to surrendering.

"The chances are that they would turn us over to the Indians," said one of the dragoons, "and the red scoundrels would butcher us or torture us to death. I, for one, would rather die fighting."

The others said the same.

This suited Dick.

It was what he wished to do.

He gave orders for the men to station themselves all around the edge of the knoll, so as to be in readiness to repel the enemy if it attempted to reach them.

The men went to their places at once.

Then Dick hastened to one of the tallest trees on the knoll and climbed it.

He wished to take a survey of the surrounding country, and see if he could locate the enemy.

This was not difficult to do.

In every direction he looked he saw Indians and redcoats.

They had surrounded the knoll.

There were, Dick judged, at least five hundred of the enemy.

This was great odds.

It would have been overwhelming odds in an open field.

Dick believed he could hold the knoll with his one hundred men against the fiercest attack from the redcoats, Tories and British.

Dick descended from the tree.

Bob joined him at once.

"Well, Dick, it looks as if we are in a fix, doesn't it?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Bob. We are threatened by reds and whites, to the number of at least five hundred; but I believe we can hold our own against them. We will give them a fight that will make it worth their while, anyway."

"That's what we will!" declared Bob, grimly.

One of the men now approached the youths.

"They are advancing up the slope, captain," he said to Dick.

"Very well; return to your post."

The man saluted and made his way back to his station.

Dick and Bob followed.

Dick sent Bob to the left, while he went to the right, and they made their way around the edge of the knoll, giving instructions to the men.

Each dragoon had four pistols.

Dick and Bob instructed the men to fire one pistol at a time.

They told them to wait till the Indians and redcoats were quite close, and then to take good aim before firing.

After the first volley, they were to fire the other three pistols as rapidly as possible, and then charge.

The men said they would go according to orders.

By the time Dick and Bob had made the circuit, the Indians and redcoats were half way up the slope.

The youths stood and watched the advancing enemy, calmly.

They did not seem to be excited in the least.

The dragoons, also, were cool and calm.

They were old hands.

They had been tried in the fire of battle.

In truth, they were looking forward, with eagerness, to the coming encounter.

It had been some time since they had had a fight with the enemy, and now they were more than willing to engage in a struggle with the Indians and redcoats.

Closer and closer came the enemy.

Presently they were within fifty yards of the summit of the knoll.

Onward and upward they came.

Presently they were within a hundred feet of the top.

Still Dick's men reserved their fire.

Still onward and upward came the Indians and redcoats.

Presently they were within fifty feet of the top.

Dick judged that this was close enough.

He leveled his pistol, took deliberate aim at one of the Indians, and said: "Fire!"

At the same instant he pulled the trigger.

Crack! went the pistol.

A few seconds later a hundred pistols cracked.

The volley was a deadly one.

The men had taken good aim.

Nearly a hundred of the enemy went down, either dead or wounded.

Shrieks, cries and curses went up from the redcoats and Tories.

Blood-curdling war-whoops and death-yells escaped the Indians.

Dick's men seized their other three pistols in rapid succession, and fired three more volleys.

These volleys, fired in rapid succession, and almost in the very faces of the redcoats, Tories and Indians, demoralized them.

They were thrown into great disorder.

They were confused, almost dazed by their terrible reception.

Dick seized upon the proper moment and gave the order to charge.

His men leaped to their feet, sword in hand, and, giving vent to loud cheers, they rushed down upon the demoralized ranks of the enemy.

So terrible was their attack, that the Indians, redcoats and Tories were hurled in every direction, like chaff before the wind.

Dick's men had the advantage in that they were coming down hill, and such was their momentum that the enemy could not stand before them.

Dick, Bob and the patriot dragoons cut and slashed and fought with such furious energy that they quickly completed the demoralization in the enemy's ranks.

First, some of the Indians broke and fled; next, Tories

and redcoats began following suit, and soon all were in full flight.

After them charged the patriot dragoons.

They yelled and cheered with such vigor as to add terror to the situation and aid in accelerating the speed of the fleeing redskins, Tories and redcoats.

It was a complete and utter rout.

Dick and his men had inflicted terrible punishment upon the enemy.

Nearly two hundred of the Indians, Tories and redcoats were either killed or wounded.

Wonderful to relate, only six of the dragoons were killed and only ten were wounded.

Luckily none of these were seriously wounded.

Dick was well satisfied.

Everything considered, he had won a great victory.

"Say, Dick, this is all right!" said Bob, enthusiastically. "I haven't had so much fun in a long while. Jove! it has got my blood to circulating once more."

"It was pretty lively while it lasted, Bob."

"It was, for a fact. Say, do you suppose they will try it again?"

"I don't know, Bob, but it is likely they will."

"I hope so. I'd like about one more mixup like that."

"They may wait until after dark and then try to slip up and take us unawares."

"I shouldn't be surprised. That is the Indian way of doing business, you know, and that gang is made up largely of Indians."

"Nearly half of their number are Indians, I should judge."

"Yes, just about half."

Dick stationed men where they could keep watch of the movements of the enemy, and then he made his way, accompanied by his men, down the hillside to where the dead and wounded lay.

The wounded were lifted and carried onto the top of the knoll, and when all had been taken up there, Dick and his men busied themselves making the poor fellows as comfortable as was possible.

Indians, Tories and redcoats lay side by side, and Dick and his men gave one as much attention as another.

The afternoon wore away and the shades of evening began to descend.

The enemy had made no move toward making another assault.

So severely had the allied forces been handled that they hesitated to make another attack.

When evening came, Dick and his men ate a hearty supper.

They also attended to the wants of the wounded men and the prisoners, giving them food and drink.

As night drew on, Dick stationed sentinels at intervals of twenty paces, everywhere around the edge of the knoll.

When night finally came and the men lay down to rest, they lay on their arms.

They were ready to leap to their feet at an instant's notice.

Somehow, Dick felt that the Indians, Tories and redcoats would make an attack some time during the night.

In this he was right.

At about two o'clock in the morning the camp was aroused by pistol shots.

Instantly all leaped to their feet.

They rushed to the edge of the knoll and took up their positions.

It was tolerably dark, but dark forms could be distinguished coming up the slope.

The Indians, Tories and redcoats were on hand once more.

They made a fierce attack.

The result was, that although they fought desperately, and tried hard to get a foothold on top of the knoll, they did not succeed.

They were repulsed and driven back, and finally broke and fled, leaving a number of dead and wounded.

"Do you think they will attempt it again to-night, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I hardly think so. I think this will about end the matter."

And such proved to be the case.

The enemy did not return to the attack that night.

The British officer and the Indian chief whom Dick had captured the day before were downhearted when they learned that their friends had been defeated.

This affair was Dick's first success in the Mohawk valley.

But it was not his last.

He entered upon a campaign, which was destined to prove very beneficial to the patriot farmers and citizens of the valley.

He chased the Indians, Tories and redcoats here, there and everywhere.

Dick made his name one to inspire terror.

He was not yet satisfied, however.

He had not yet met Thayendanagea.

He would not be satisfied until he did meet the chief.

About a week later he came upon Thayendanegea and two hundred braves.

They were burning and pillaging.

Dick and his dragoons attacked the Indians and gave them a severe trouncing.

They scattered and fled.

During the fight, Dick once encountered Thayendanegea.

The chief threw his tomahawk at Dick, missing him by a hair's breadth.

Dick rushed forward, with drawn sword.

Had the chief stood his ground, his career would have come to a sudden end, then and there.

He seemed to realize this fact.

He did not stand his ground.

Instead, he whirled his horse and rode away at break-neck speed.

This ended the fight.

The Indians followed the example set by their illustrious leader.

That was the last fight of any consequence that Dick and his comrades took part in.

A few days later they returned to Albany.

General Schuyler thanked them, heartily, for the good work which they had done, both in Albany and the Mohawk valley, and a day or two later they left Albany and

started to rejoin the main patriot army down in New Jersey.

THE END.

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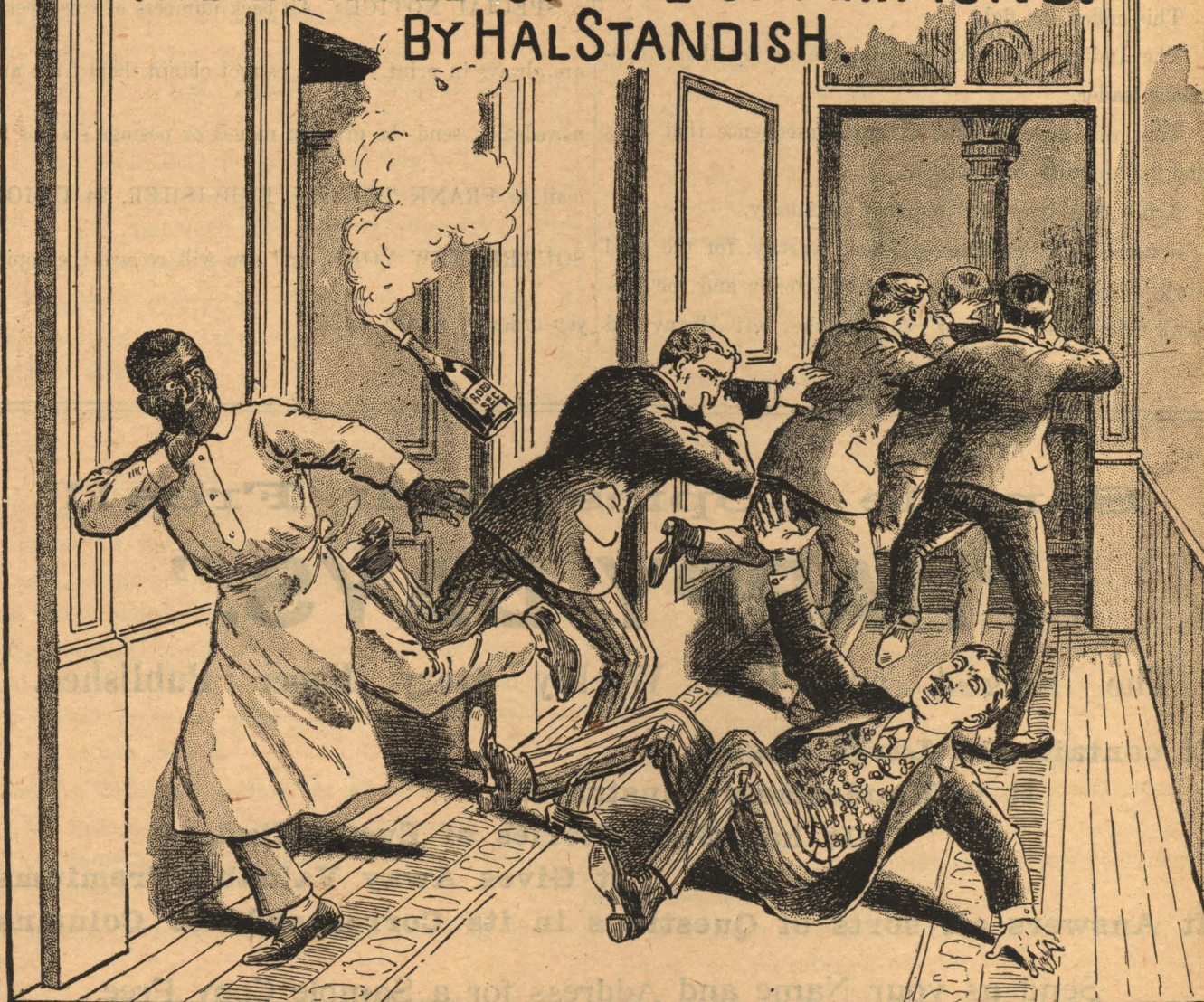
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